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CONDOR, GIANT BIRD OF CALIFORNIA  
MAY BE SAVED FROM EXTINCTION

Santa Barbara National Forest Now Only Home of Largest  
North American Bird, Forest Service Says

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The great California condor, one of the largest birds of this continent, reduced in numbers by encroaching civilization, has gradually retreated until its sole known habitat is now Los Padres National Forest in California, formerly the Santa Barbara National Forest. Special efforts are being made by the Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, it was stated today, for the protection of the remaining few, otherwise the giant bird species faces almost certain extinction.

Subject of innumerable imaginative tales because of its great size and strength and because of its habit of nesting high in craggy mountain peaks, the California condor's range of flight extends far beyond the National Forest boundary, but in no other place are its permanent roosts and nesting places found.



GIANT CALIFORNIA CONDOR

It has, therefore, been one of the tasks of the staff of Los Padres National Forest to act for its preservation. The Forest Service was aided last year in gather-

ing information on the bird and its habits by the National Association of Audubon Societies.

In a recent report to the National Association of Audubon Societies, Cyril S. Robinson of the Forest Service, associate forester on the Supervisor's staff of Los Padres National Forest, cited environment and sources of food supply as the factors which primarily govern the existence of the great birds, and outlined steps which must be taken to safeguard them.

"The favored locations must provide undisturbed roosting and nesting places, opportunities for bathing and drinking, and elevation sufficient to provide timber, clear water and geological or topographical conditions that will afford opportunities for nesting," he said.

It is largely because of their eating habits that the California condors have come upon evil days, it was explained. The birds will eat the flesh of any dead animal, particularly the larger ones such as cattle, sheep, horses, deer and pigs. "In the days when hides were worth more than meat," Mr. Robinson pointed out, "the rotting carcasses of cattle were plentiful. As these conditions changed, the opportunities for food within easy distance of roosting places grew less and less."

Turning to deer, the condors found the supply of dead deer steadily diminishing. Nowadays a flock of sheep might attract the condors for one season, but the next will find the sheep ten to twenty miles from the condors' headquarters.

For these reasons, the paper states, and also because of indifference by the general public to State laws covering protection of the birds, the California condor population is threatened with extinction.

"From what has been learned during the past few years," Mr. Robinson said,

"it is obvious that some additional measure of protection to the environment is most desirable. Study of the present situation indicates that complete isolation and the proper protection against anything that would change or alter the present conditions is essential. Any major disturbance, such as a severe forest fire or invasion by people, may so seriously affect the remaining condor population as to wipe it out. The bird is so constituted as to be handicapped by the very factors that make for its magnificent importance. Its size, that calls for space and easily accessible landing places; the peculiar conditions that must make up its place of permanent abode; the fact that it returns to the same nests and roosts year after year; these are a few of the reasons that make it so important to see that the situation does not change for the worse."